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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 000546

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/WE, EUR/ERA, NEA/ELA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/31/2018

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [LE](#) [SP](#)

SUBJECT: SPAIN SUPPORTS ARAB LEAGUE EFFORTS IN LEBANON

REF: (A) STATE 52061 (B) STATE 49259

Classified By: DCM Hugo Llorens for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Charge delivered Ref(A) demarche to FM Moratinos' Political Director Rafael Dezcallar on May 16. Spain also strongly backs the Arab League's mediation of the Lebanon crisis and fully supports the agreement in Beirut announced May 15. Dezcallar said Spain is relieved that the violence has stopped and that dialogue is underway.

¶2. (C) Stressing the importance of dialogue, Dezcallar said that FM Moratinos was in direct contact with the parties to urge that all work towards consensus. In response to our points about Hizballah's actions that undermine the Lebanese government's authority and sovereignty, Dezcallar agreed that Hizballah is a destabilizing force. Spain says in private, to us and to others, that Hizballah is a problem. However, Spain also believes that Hizballah is a political reality that is not going to go away. In addition, Spain believes that a confrontational approach against Hizballah will not improve the situation in Lebanon. Therefore, it advocates engagement and dialogue.

¶3. (C) Similarly, Spain agrees that Iran and Syria are backing Hizballah, but they think that additional pressure will only exacerbate the current situation. There is even more reason to expand discussions with Iran and Syria after the latest Hizballah attacks. Dezcallar did not respond to Charge's urging that Spain designate Hizballah in its entirety as a terrorist organization, nor to urging for Spain to recall its Ambassadors for consultations. According to Dezcallar, "Spain sees a window of opportunity," after the latest Arab League mediation offer and it will focus its efforts on continuing dialogue with the parties.

¶4. (C) Embassy Comment: Moratinos uses a "hands-on" approach to manage this portfolio within the MFA and banks on his personal relationships with leaders in the region to keep open lines of communication. During the Secretary's scheduled meeting with Moratinos on May 19, he will need to hear again our strong views on Hizballah's actions and why dialogue, unless linked with disincentives for bad behavior, is counterproductive. End Comment.  
Llorens